DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 097 823 HE 005 977

AUTHOR Doerann-George, Judith; And Others
TITLE Grading: Student and Faculty Opinions. Indiana Studies in Prediction, No. 26.
INSTITUTION Indiana Univ., Bloomington. Bureau of Educational Studies and Testing.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 46p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.85 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *College Students; *Grading; *Higher Education; *Opinions; Research Projects; Student Opinion; Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This study surveyed student and faculty opinion about the university grading system. The results show discontent with the system, but a feeling that some type of grading is probably necessary. Students disagreed that faculty collect enough information for grading; students did not believe faculty were too lenient in grading, but many faculty disagreed with this point; both faculty and students agreed that course objectives were too obscure, but students did understand what they must do to get a grade. Students had a tendency to believe that grades are related to faculty ability, but faculty disagreed with this. Students and faculty alike were split in preference for objective and subjective grading, but AI's preferred objective. All groups agreed that faculty should be allowed to choose different products (papers, tests, etc.) as a base for grading different students. Students and faculty saw grades as motivating (males more than females), and as anxiety producing (females more so than males). All believed that good grades are useful in getting jobs and in being accepted for graduate work, but students believed grades do not accurately reflect their achievement. Faculty had a tendency to believe grades do reflect achievement, but AI's were undecided. All groups lean toward agreeing that some form of grading is necessary if academic standards are to be maintained. (Author)

ED 097823

Grading: Student and Faculty Opinions

INDIANA STUDIES IN PREDICTION

NUMBER TWENTY-SIX

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Bureau of Educational Studies and Testing
INDIANA UNIVERSITY / 1974

HE 005 977

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	1
The Student Data	2
Sex and Class Differences	8
The Instructor Data	33
Comparing Student and Faculty Data	42

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

		Page
Table A	Percentage in Each Response Category for All Students Combined.	10
Table B	Percentage in Response Categories for Male and Female Students	13
Table C	Percentage in Response Categories for Each Class and Graduate Students	16
Table D	Means of Students in Each Class.	22
Table E	Percentage in Each Response Category for Associate Instructors & Faculty.	37
Figure A1	Profile of Mean Response of All Students	26
Figure B1	Profile of Means of Male and Female Students.	30
Figure E1	Profile of Faculty and Associate Instructors.	40

INTRODUCTION

One of the perennial controversies among students and faculty alike centers on the grading system of the University. Typically the discussions are based on very little data. For this reason the Bureau undertook to provide information which could bring an element of objectivity into an arena where emotions typically hold a strong upper hand.

The intent of this study was to survey a carefully selected sample of faculty, associate instructors, and students to see how they view a variety of situations related to the grading system. The system here is the classical, four-point scale of A, B, C, D, F, with F being failure, and A being superior work. Typically C is considered average achievement although there is clear evidence that the average grade runs well above C.*

The following pages report student data separate from faculty, and then provide a brief comparison.

*Chase, C. I., Thompson, R., "Predicting Success for University Freshmen," Indiana Studies in Prediction: No. 1, Supplement 4, Bureau of Educational Studies and Testing, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1973.

THE STUDENT DATA

Of the 195 questionnaires completed by students, 190 were usable for analysis. Of this sample, 95 were responses from females and 95 from males. Sorting by class yielded 43 freshmen (22 percent), 43 sophomores (22 percent), 30 juniors (15 percent), 38 seniors (19 percent), and 36 graduate students or "other" classification (18 percent). A balanced sample of students was obtained.

Five graduate student interviewers were used to obtain the student sample. The interviewers were instructed to administer the questionnaires to students in a variety of locations, such as dorms, cafeterias, libraries, sorority and fraternity houses. This was done to insure a sample as representative of the spectrum of students as possible.

The interviewers gave instructions regarding the questionnaire and received the completed instruments from the student respondents.

Responses to the Student Questionnaire

The design of the questionnaire allowed five categories of responses, from strongly disagree to strongly

agree, for 26 of the items. The 27th item requested a ranking of preference for various procedures for determining grades. The student questionnaire, together with percentages of students choosing each category of response, is shown in Table A.

Student opinion was generally spread across response categories, which indicates that student feelings were not unanimous regarding grades or the grading system. However, it appears that over half of the students were dissatisfied with some aspect or aspects of the grading system. (In the discussion which follows, the "agree" and "strongly agree" percentages are usually combined, as are the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" percentages; the percentages for separate categories can be found in Table A.)

Sixty-three percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed with Item 1, which states that the present grading system is inadequate. Nevertheless, about the same proportion agreed that some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards (Item 16), good grades help students in the job market (Item 25) and in getting into graduate work (Item 26). Students appear to believe that grades have a clear role, but do not like the system.

Fairness. Various aspects of the grading system were treated in the questionnaire. One significant aspect might be termed "fairness"--whether or not grades received correspond to student achievement or performance. Statements dealing with this question are numbers 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, and 22. Twenty-six percent of students sampled strongly disagreed, and 39 percent disagreed with the statement: "On the whole, my grades accurately represent my achievement at I.U." (Item 2). Similarly, about two thirds of students disagreed in some measure that faculty acquire enough evidence to report valid grades (3), although slightly over half believed that most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work (7).

Most students disagreed with statements that faculty are lenient in awarding grades (item 5) or that few faculty will award D's or F's even to low achieving students (6). Only 20 percent agreed, and 60 percent disagreed, that the grading system differentiates fairly among students who achieve at different levels (12). A high proportion (84 percent) of students reported that instructors of different sections of the same course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement (22).

Related to the question of fairness is the degree to which students believe they are informed about objectives of a course and the basis for grading. Only twenty-eight percent agreed, while 59 percent disagreed, that most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course (4). However, 71 percent responded that they do usually understand the basis on which their grades are given (8).

Variables in grade achievement. If, in the opinion of many students, grades do not correspond to achievement or performance, what might be the sources of grades? Seventy-one percent agreed (30 percent strongly agreed) that to get a good grade it is often necessary to agree with the instructor's opinions (18). Half of the students reported that their grades usually correspond with the instructor's teaching ability, although 32 percent disagreed (19). "Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies" drew agreement from 51 percent of students sampled, but 37 percent disagreed (20). Opinion was diverse on whether grades correspond more accurately with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas (Item 21). Forty-one percent of the students agreed, 33 percent disagreed, and 27 percent were uncertain that grades were more accurate in major subjects than in other courses.

Instructor options. Statements 9 and 10 dealt with instructor options for grading procedures. Fifty-one percent of the students agreed that instructors should be allowed to select a different basis, such as tests, papers, projects, etc., for grading one student than is used for another student; 34 percent disagreed. Students were less willing to allow options regarding standards; 56 percent believed that instructors should use the same standards of quality for grading all students, while 33 percent disagreed. Regarding their own preferences for bases of grades (Item 17), students were split between objective and subjective procedures. Thirty-six percent preferred objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures, 33 percent did not, and 29 percent were uncertain.

Effects of grades. Some possible effects that grades and the grading system may have on students were the subject of statements 11, 13, 14, 15, 23 and 24. Eighty-five percent of students agreed, and only seven percent disagreed, that an instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading influences a student's selection of a course (11). Competition among students (13) is tied to the grading system, as is anxiety over anticipated grades (14), according to a majority of students. In

addition, although 34 percent thought they would study less in courses if grades didn't exist, 54 percent disagreed with that statement (15). Students disagree (78 percent) that students with a reputation of high GPA's are less likely to be accepted by their peers. Nearly as many (73 percent) reported that a student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.

Although most students seem to believe that there are several negative (and a few positive) effects of the grading system, they also perceive some uses for grades. Almost two thirds agreed that some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards (Item 16). About the same proportion agreed that better jobs are offered to students with high GPA's (25). That grades are useful for selection of students for graduate school (26) was acknowledged by 54 percent of the students; one fourth disagreed.

The preference for grading procedures was the subject of Question 27. Forty percent of students ranked "combination of above" as their first choice, and the others in order of preference were "objective tests," "essay tests," and finally "term papers."

In summary, it can be concluded that students view the grading system as inadequate, but believe it has some

uses which may justify it. However, about two thirds of students feel that grades are not administered in a uniformly fair way, and that effects of grades on students are largely undesirable.

SEX AND CLASS DIFFERENCES

Do male students hold opinions on these questions that differ from those of female students? Do upperclassmen or graduate students view grades and grading procedures differently from undergraduates? To determine if the sex or grade level of students was related to their opinions about grading, separate analyses were run on those subdivisions.

Percentages in response categories for male and female students for each item are in Table B, and Figure B1 shows the location of the mean rating of each group.

On the grading issues treated in this questionnaire, opinions of male and female students were quite similar, although female attitudes may have been slightly more negative. (See Table B and Figure B1.) More males than females disagreed that the system was inadequate and agreed that some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards. Competition was important to more

males, while more females were concerned with anxiety. More females disagreed that they would study less if grades did not exist, and more males felt that grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies. Instructor options regarding grade bases and standards were reviewed favorably by more females. Considerably more males than females believed better jobs are offered to students with high GPA's.

Table C shows percentages in response categories for each class and graduate students. Although there are differences in opinion across classes, there are no consistent trends or relationships between class and attitude, except for an increasing preference for term papers and decreasing preferences for objective tests, as grading procedures, with higher class levels. Means for the four classes and graduate students are reported and illustrated in Table D.

TABLE A
PERCENTAGE IN EACH RESPONSE CATEGORY
FOR ALL STUDENTS COMBINED

	Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	The present grading system (A-B-C-D-F) is inadequate.	6	20	11	41	22
2.	On the whole my grades accurately represent my achievement at I.U.	26	39	11	22	2
3.	Generally, faculty acquire enough evidence of my competence through the semester to report a valid grade for me.	26	37	11	26	2
4.	Most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course.	16	43	14	26	2
5.	Faculty are generally too lenient in awarding grades.	18	52	24	5	1
6.	Few faculty will award Ds or Fs even to low achieving students.	16	46	21	13	3
7.	Most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work.	1	18	27	46	8
8.	I usually understand the basis on which my grades are given.	5	15	8	66	5
9.	Within a given class, a faculty member should be allowed to select a different basis (i.e., tests, papers, etc.) for grading one student than is used for another student.	16	18	15	31	20
10.	Within a given class the instructor should use the same standards of quality of a product (e.g., papers) for grading one student as he used for grading other students.	12	21	11	35	21

Table A, continued

		SD	D	U	A	SA
11.	An instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading is one influence on a student's selection of a course.	1	3	9	48	37
12.	The grading system generally differentiates fairly among students who achieve at different levels.	18	42	20	16	4
13.	Competition among students is created by the grading system.	4	16	9	39	31
14.	Anticipation of grades rarely causes me considerable anxiety.	32	33	8	21	7
15.	I would probably study less in courses if grades didn't exist.	23	31	14	22	12
16.	Some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards.	7	14	15	47	17
17.	I prefer objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures.	10	23	29	28	8
18.	To get a good grade it is often important to agree with the instructor's opinions.	6	12	11	41	30
19.	My grades usually correspond with the teaching ability of the instructor.	8	24	17	37	13
20.	Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies.	12	25	12	38	13
21.	Grades more accurately correspond with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas.	8	33	27	25	8
22.	Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement.	1	2	14	56	28
23.	Students with a reputation of high GPAs are less likely to be accepted by their peers.	32	46	12	8	3

Table A, continued

	SD	D	U	A	SA
24. A student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.	5	9	13	52	21
25. Better jobs are offered to students with high GPAs.	3	12	22	47	17
26. Grades are useful in selecting students for graduate school.	10	15	19	42	12

27. Rank the following procedures for determining your grade (1 = most preferred, 2 next most, etc.).

	1	2	3	4
objective tests	27	28	18	21
essay tests	17	32	29	17
term papers	12	25	24	34
combination of above	40	11	23	19

N=190

TABLE B
PERCENTAGES IN RESPONSE CATEGORIES
FOR MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS

	Statement		SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	The present grading system (A-B-C-D-F) is inadequate.	Female	5	14	15	40	26
		Male	7	26	6	42	18
2.	On the whole my grades accurately represent my achievement at I.U.	Female	21	46	11	21	1
		Male	29	32	12	23	2
3.	Generally, faculty acquire enough evidence of my competence through the semester to report a valid grade for me.	Female	25	41	11	22	1
		Male	24	33	11	29	3
4.	Most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course.	Female	18	42	12	25	2
		Male	14	43	16	26	1
5.	Faculty are generally too lenient in awarding grades.	Female	16	54	24	5	0
		Male	20	49	24	5	1
6.	Few faculty will award Ds or Fs even to low achieving students.	Female	16	44	28	8	2
		Male	17	47	14	18	4
7.	Most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work	Female	1	21	24	46	7
		Male	0	15	29	45	8
8.	I usually understand the basis on which my grades are given.	Female	5	14	6	69	5
		Male	4	17	11	63	5
9.	Within a given class, a faculty member should be allowed to select a different basis (i.e., tests, papers, etc.) for grading one student than is used for another student.	Female	13	16	16	33	23
		Male	19	20	15	29	17

Table B, continued

			SD	D	U	A	SA
10.	Within a given class the instructor should use the same standards of quality of a product (e.g., papers) for grading one student as he uses for grading other students.	Female	9	27	9	38	17
		Male	13	15	13	35	25
11.	An instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading is one influence on a student's selection of a course.	Female	0	5	6	54	35
		Male	2	6	11	42	39
12.	The grading system generally differentiates fairly among students who achieve at different levels.	Female	16	47	21	13	3
		Male	21	36	19	19	4
13.	Competition among students is created by the grading system.	Female	4	15	13	39	29
		Male	3	18	6	40	33
14.	Anticipation of grades rarely causes me considerable anxiety.	Female	37	32	8	21	2
		Male	26	34	7	20	13
15.	I would probably study less in courses if grades didn't exist.	Female	23	35	15	21	6
		Male	22	26	13	22	17
16.	Some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards.	Female	9	17	17	42	15
		Male	5	11	13	52	20
17.	I prefer objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures.	Female	13	23	29	25	8
		Male	7	23	29	32	7
18.	To get a good grade it is often important to agree with the instructor's opinions.	Female	3	11	12	45	29
		Male	8	14	11	37	31
19.	My grades usually correspond with the teaching ability of the instructor.	Female	4	19	20	43	14
		Male	12	29	15	32	13
20.	Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies.	Female	15	27	9	38	9
		Male	9	23	14	38	16

Table B, continued

			SD	D	U	A	SA
21.	Grades more accurately correspond with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas.	Female	6	34	25	31	4
		Male	9	32	28	19	12
22.	Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement.	Female	0	0	13	60	26
		Male	1	3	15	52	29
23.	Students with a reputation of high GPAs are less likely to be accepted by their peers.	Female	32	43	15	9	1
		Male	32	48	8	7	4
24.	A student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.	Female	4	12	13	49	22
		Male	6	7	13	55	19
25.	Better jobs are offered to students with high GPAS.	Female	4	12	27	43	13
		Male	1	12	16	51	21
26.	Grades are useful in selecting students for graduate school.	Female	13	17	18	41	9
		Male	7	14	21	43	14
27.	Rank the following procedures for determining your grade (1 = most preferred, 2 next most, etc.).		1	2	3	4	
	objective tests	Female	24	22	19	28	
		Male	31	35	17	14	
	essay tests	Female	19	36	24	17	
		Male	16	28	35	17	
	term papers	Female	13	29	26	26	
		Male	12	20	22	41	
	combination of above	Female	41	7	27	16	
		Male	39	14	19	20	

Female N=95
Male N=95

TABLE C
PERCENTAGES IN RESPONSE CATEGORIES
FOR EACH CLASS AND GRADUATE STUDENTS

Statement		SD	D	U	A	SA
1. The present grading system (A-B-C-D-F) is inadequate.	Fresh.	12	26	2	42	19
	Soph.	7	12	7	44	30
	Jr.	7	30	21	23	13
	Sr.	3	16	11	50	21
	Grad.	3	19	11	42	25
2. On the whole my grades accurately represent my achievement at I.U.	Fresh.	30	40	9	16	2
	Soph.	25	47	9	16	2
	Jr.	26	27	7	37	0
	Sr.	21	47	13	18	0
	Grad.	22	31	17	28	3
3. Generally, faculty acquire enough evidence of my competence through the semester to report a valid grade for me.	Fresh.	37	33	7	23	0
	Soph.	33	42	9	16	0
	Jr.	13	40	10	37	0
	Sr.	21	45	11	24	0
	Grad.	14	25	17	33	11
4. Most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course.	Fresh.	9	37	23	30	0
	Soph.	16	47	14	23	0
	Jr.	7	43	13	30	3
	Sr.	24	39	11	26	0
	Grad.	22	47	6	19	6
5. Faculty are generally too lenient in awarding grades.	Fresh.	33	44	21	0	2
	Soph.	14	49	33	5	0
	Jr.	10	60	23	7	0
	Sr.	16	53	26	3	0
	Grad.	14	56	17	14	0

Table C, continued

		SD	D	U	A	SA
6. Few faculty will award Ds or Fs even to low achieving students.	Fresh.	16	42	30	7	5
	Soph.	23	42	16	14	5
	Jr.	20	43	17	13	3
	Sr.	11	58	21	11	0
	Grad.	11	[illegible]	19	22	3
7. Most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work.	Fresh.	0	19	26	46	7
	Soph.	2	19	28	42	9
	Jr.	0	10	30	57	3
	Sr.	0	18	26	42	8
	Grad.	0	22	25	42	11
8. I usually understand the basis on which my grades are given.	Fresh.	5	16	12	65	2
	Soph.	9	23	7	56	5
	Jr.	3	10	7	77	3
	Sr.	0	16	11	68	5
	Grad.	6	8	6	69	11
9. Within a given class, a faculty member should be allowed to select a different basis (i.e., tests, papers, etc.) for grading one student than is used for another student.	Fresh.	19	12	23	30	16
	Soph.	16	9	7	42	26
	Jr.	17	13	23	27	20
	Sr.	13	34	8	26	18
	Grad.	14	22	17	28	19
10. Within a given class the instructor should use the same standards of quality of a product (e.g., papers) for grading one student as he uses for grading other students.	Fresh	18	23	7	28	23
	Soph.	12	28	9	30	21
	Jr.	7	30	7	37	20
	Sr.	5	13	13	45	21
	Grad.	11	11	19	39	19
11. An instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading is one influence on a student's selection of a course.	Fresh.	0	5	12	49	35
	Soph.	2	9	12	49	28
	Jr.	0	7	3	47	43
	Sr.	0	3	8	47	42
	Grad.	3	6	6	47	39

Table C, continued

			SD	D	U	A	SA
12.	The grading system generally differentiates fairly among students who achieve at different levels.	Fresh.	21	30	19	23	5
		Soph.	19	47	19	14	2
		Jr.	10	30	33	17	10
		Sr.	18	61	5	16	0
		Grad.	22	39	28	8	3
13.	Competition among students is created by the grading system.	Fresh.	2	14	9	47	28
		Soph.	5	16	14	42	23
		Jr.	7	20	7	40	27
		Sr.	0	18	16	34	32
		Grad.	6	14	0	33	47
14.	Anticipation of grades rarely causes me considerable anxiety.	Fresh	40	33	2	16	9
		Soph.	25	40	12	19	5
		Jr.	30	20	7	37	7
		Sr.	39	34	8	13	5
		Grad.	22	33	11	22	11
15.	I would probably study less in courses if grades didn't exist.	Fresh.	21	26	16	23	14
		Soph.	28	28	14	14	16
		Jr.	13	23	20	37	7
		Sr.	16	42	5	24	13
		Grad.	33	33	14	14	6
16.	Some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards.	Fresh.	7	9	9	51	33
		Soph.	14	9	16	42	19
		Jr.	0	7	13	70	10
		Sr.	5	21	16	47	11
		Grad.	8	22	19	28	22
17.	I prefer objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures.	Fresh.	7	28	30	21	14
		Soph.	12	19	35	30	2
		Jr.	10	20	50	10	7
		Sr.	8	21	16	45	11
		Grad.	14	28	19	33	6

Table C, continued

		SD	D	U	A	SA
18. To get a good grade it is often important to agree with the instructor's opinions.	Fresh.	9	9	5	44	33
	Soph.	5	12	12	40	33
	Jr.	3	30	10	33	23
	Sr.	3	5	18	47	28
	Grad.	8	8	11	39	33
19. My grades usually correspond with the teaching ability of the instructor.	Fresh.	12	21	12	42	14
	Soph.	2	23	14	49	12
	Jr.	7	27	30	30	7
	Sr.	5	18	21	39	16
	Grad.	14	33	14	22	17
20. Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies.	Fresh.	9	33	12	30	16
	Soph.	14	19	9	40	18
	Jr.	10	17	7	57	10
	Sr.	11	29	16	37	8
	Grad.	17	28	14	31	11
21. Grades more accurately correspond with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas.	Fresh.	5	30	40	21	5
	Soph.	7	21	28	35	12
	Jr.	7	30	27	23	13
	Sr.	16	47	16	18	3
	Grad.	6	36	25	25	8
22. Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement.	Fresh.	2	2	16	44	35
	Soph.	0	0	14	56	30
	Jr.	0	0	17	67	13
	Sr.	0	3	8	55	34
	Grad.	0	3	14	61	22
23. Students with a reputation of high GPAs are less likely to be accepted by their peers.	Fresh.	28	44	7	16	5
	Soph.	30	53	7	7	2
	Jr.	43	47	7	0	3
	Sr.	34	42	16	8	0
	Grad.	25	42	22	8	3

Table C, continued

			SD	D	U	A	SA
24.	A student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.	Fresh.	9	12	16	37	26
		Soph.	9	12	9	60	9
		Jr.	3	10	13	53	20
		Sr.	0	11	13	58	18
		Grad.	3	3	11	53	31
25.	Better jobs are offered to students with high GPAs.	Fresh.	5	9	16	49	21
		Soph.	7	19	28	30	14
		Jr.	0	3	30	57	10
		Sr.	0	16	24	50	11
		Grad.	0	8	11	53	28
26.	Grades are useful in selecting students for graduate school.	Fresh.	12	14	33	28	12
		Soph.	12	16	23	37	12
		Jr.	3	20	7	53	10
		Sr.	5	21	18	50	5
		Grad.	17	6	11	47	19
27.	Rank the following procedures for determining your grade (1 = most preferred, 2 next most, etc.)		1	2	3	4	
	objective tests	Fresh.	33	28	23	9	
		Soph.	35	37	16	9	
		Jr.	33	23	17	20	
		Sr.	18	39	16	24	
		Grad	17	11	17	47	
	essay tests	Fresh.	14	33	23	23	
		Soph.	21	30	23	23	
		Jr.	20	27	37	7	
		Sr.	21	29	32	18	
		Grad.	11	42	36	8	

Table C, continued

27. --continued--		1	2	3	4
term papers	Fresh.	0	19	33	42
	Soph.	9	21	28	37
	Jr.	10	23	20	37
	Sr.	16	26	24	32
	Grad.	28	36	14	19
combination of above	Fresh.	51	14	14	16
	Soph.	33	9	28	19
	Jr.	27	17	20	30
	Sr.	45	5	26	18
	Grad.	42	8	28	14

Freshmen	N = 43 (17 F, 26 M)
Sophomores	N = 43 (21 F, 22 M)
Juniors	N = 30 (18 F, 12 M)
Seniors	N = 38 (25 F, 13 M)
Graduates and others	N = 35 (14 F, 22 M)

Table D. Means of Students in Each Class

Statement	Fr.	So.	Jr.	Sr.	Gr.
1. The present grading system (A-B-C-D-F) is inadequate.	5.3	5.8	5.1	5.7	5.7
2. On the whole my grades accurately represent my achievement at I.U.	4.0	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.6
3. Generally, faculty acquire enough evidence of my competence through the semester to report a valid grade for me.	4.1	4.1	4.7	4.4	5.0
4. Most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course.	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.4	4.4
5. Faculty are generally too lenient in awarding grades.	4.0	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.3
6. Few faculty will award Ds or Fs even to low achieving students.	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.6
7. Most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work.	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.1	5.4
8. I usually understand the basis on which my grades are given.	5.4	5.2	5.7	5.6	5.7
9. Within a given class, a faculty member should be allowed to select a different basis (i.e., tests, papers, etc.) for grading one student than is used for another student.	5.1	5.5	5.2	5.0	6.0
10. Within a given class the instructor should use the same standards of quality of a product (e.g., papers) for grading one student as he uses for grading other students.	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.5	5.4

Table D, continued

	Fr.	So.	Jr.	Sr.	Gr.
11. An instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading is one influence on a student's selection of a course.	6.1	5.9	6.3	6.3	6.1
12. The grading system generally differentiates fairly among students who achieve at different levels.	4.5	4.4	4.9	4.2	4.3
13. Competition among students is created by the grading system.	5.8	5.6	5.6	5.8	6.0
14. Anticipation of grades rarely causes me considerable anxiety.	4.2	4.4	4.7	4.1	4.7
15. I would probably study less in courses if grades didn't exist.	4.8	4.6	5.0	4.8	4.2
16. Some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards.	5.7	5.4	5.8	5.4	5.3
17. I prefer objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures.	5.1	4.8	4.7	5.3	4.9
18. To get a good grade it is often important to agree with the instructor's opinions.	5.9	5.8	5.4	5.9	5.8
19. My grades usually correspond with the teaching ability of the instructor.	5.3	5.4	5.0	5.4	4.9
20. Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies.	5.1	5.1	5.4	5.0	4.9
21. Grades more accurately correspond with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas.	4.9	5.2	5.1	4.4	4.9
22. Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement.	6.1	6.2	6.0	6.2	6.0

Table D, continued

		Fr.	So.	Jr.	Sr.	Gr.
23.	Students with a reputation of high GPAs are less likely to be accepted by their peers.	4.3	4.0	3.7	4.0	4.2
24.	A student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.	5.6	5.5	5.8	5.8	6.1
25.	Better jobs are offered to students with high GPAs.	5.7	5.2	5.7	5.6	6.0
26.	Grades are useful in selecting students for graduate school.	5.0	5.2	5.1	5.3	5.5
27.	Rank the following procedures for determining your grade (1 = most preferred, 2 next most, etc.).					
	objective tests	2.1	2.1	2.5	2.4	3.1
	essay tests	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.4
	term papers	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.7	2.2
	combination of above.	1.8	2.1	2.6	2.1	2.0

Figure A1. Profile of Mean Response of All Students

Item		SD 3	D 4	U 5	A 6	SA 7
1.	The present grading system (A-B-C-D-F) is inadequate.	5.5				
2.	On the whole my grades accurately represent my achievement at I.U.	4.4				
3.	Generally, faculty acquire enough evidence of my competence through the semester to report a valid grade for me.	4.5				
4.	Most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course	4.5				
5.	Faculty are generally too lenient in awarding grades.	4.2				
6.	Few faculty will award Ds or Fs even to low achieving students.	4.4				
7.	Most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work.	5.4				
8.	I usually understand the basis on which my grades are given.	5.5				
9.	Within a given class, a faculty member should be allowed to select a different basis (i.e., tests, papers, etc.) for grading one student than is used for another student.	5.2				
10.	Within a given class the instructor should use the same standards of quality of a product (e.g., papers) for grading one student as he uses for grading other students.	5.3				
11.	An instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading is one influence on a student's selection of a course.	6.1				
12.	The grading system generally differentiates fairly among students who achieve at different levels.					

13.	Competition among students is created by the grading system.	5.8
14.	Anticipation of grades rarely causes me considerable anxiety.	4.4
15.	I would probably study less in courses if grades didn't exist.	4.7
16.	Some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards.	5.5
17.	I prefer objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures.	5.0
18.	To get a good grade it is often important to agree with the instructor's opinions.	5.8
19.	My grades usually correspond with the teaching ability of the instructor.	5.2
20.	Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies.	5.1
21.	Grades more accurately correspond with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas.	4.9
22.	Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement.	6.1
23.	Students with a reputation of high GPAs are less likely to be accepted by their peers.	4.0
*24.	A student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.	5.7
25.	Better jobs are offered to students with high GPAs	5.6
26.	Grades are useful in selecting students for graduate school.	5.2

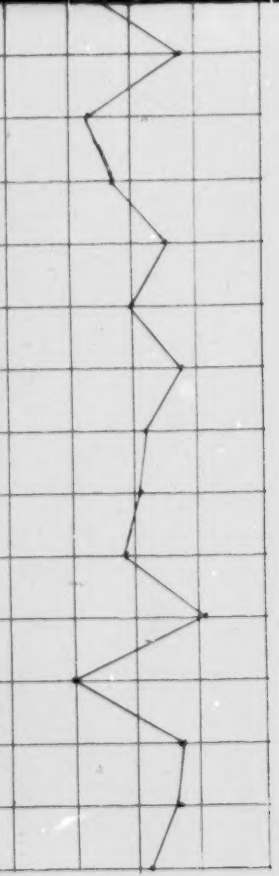


Figure A1 -- Continued

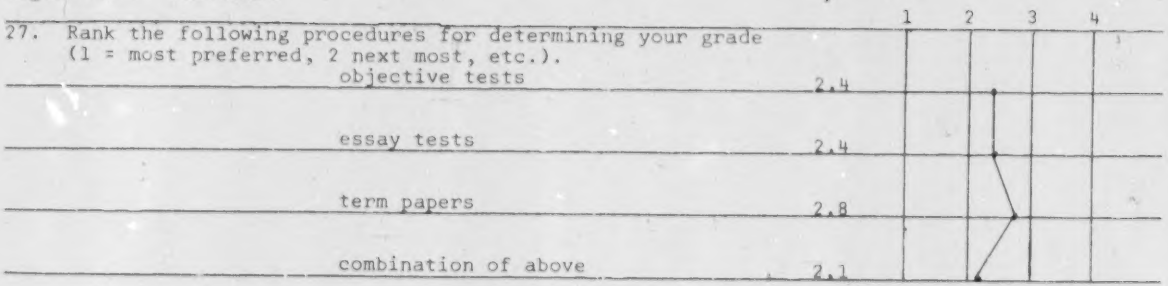


Figure B1. Profile of Means of Male and Female Students

Female —— Male ------

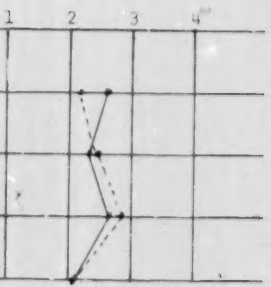
	Female	Male
1. The present grading system (A-B-C-D-F) is inadequate.	5.7	5.4
2. On the whole my grades accurately represent my achievement at I.U.	4.4	4.2
3. Generally, faculty acquire enough evidence of my competence through the semester to report a valid grade for me.	4.3	4.5
4. Most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course.	4.5	4.6
5. Faculty are generally too lenient in awarding grades.	4.1	4.2
6. Few faculty will award Ds or Fs even to low achieving students.	4.4	4.4
7. Most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work.	5.4	5.4
8. I usually understand the basis on which my grades are given.	5.6	5.5
9. Within a given class, a faculty member should be allowed to select a different basis (i.e, tests, papers, etc.) for grading one student than is used for another student.	5.4	5.0
10. Within a given class the instructor should use the same standards of quality of a product (e.g., papers) for grading one student as he uses for grading other students.	5.2	5.4
11. An instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading is one influence on a student's selection of a course.	6.3	6.1
12. The grading system generally differentiates fairly among		

13.	Competition among students is created by the grading system.	5.8	5.8
14.	Anticipation of grades rarely causes me considerable anxiety.	4.2	4.6
15.	I would probably study less in courses if grades didn't exist.	4.5	4.8
16.	Some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards.	5.4	5.7
17.	I prefer objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures.	4.9	5.0
18.	To get a good grade it is often important to agree with the instructor's opinions.	5.9	5.7
19.	My grades usually correspond with the teaching ability of the instructor.	5.4	5.0
20.	Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies.	4.9	5.3
21.	Grades more accurately correspond with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas.	4.9	4.9
22.	Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement.	6.2	6.0
23.	Students with a reputation of high GPAs are less likely to be accepted by their peers.	4.0	4.0
24.	A student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.	5.7	5.7
25.	Better jobs are offered to students with high GPAs	5.4	5.8
26.	Grades are useful in selecting students for graduate school.	5.1	5.4

Figure B1 -- Continued

27. Rank the following procedures for determining your grade (1 = most preferred, 2 next most, etc.).

			1	2	3	4
objective tests	2.6	2.2				
essay tests	2.4	2.5				
term papers	2.6	2.9				
combination of above	2.1	2.1				



THE INSTRUCTOR DATA

Thirty faculty and thirty associate instructors (AI's) were surveyed in this study. The group was identified by randomly selecting from current lists of faculty and AI's until 30 members of each group had been selected. Then the questionnaires were taken to the instructors by a research assistant who collected the data.

In light of the frequent controversies which center on grades and grading practices, the most striking result of the survey of faculty and AI's is the similarity of their profiles (Figure 1). If one applies a statistical test for differences and uses the .01 level of probability for comparing faculty-AI means on each item, only two items show faculty-AI differences. On the first item AI's are less opposed to dropping the present grading system, and on Item 18 AI's indicated that they feel that student agreement with the instructor's opinion is necessary for a high grade, whereas faculty disagreed with this statement. Aside from these two items, the first of which merely shows different degrees of attitude in the same direction, the AI's and faculty profiles are so similar that hereafter they will frequently be

treated as one group designated instructors. The separate responses for faculty and AI's are given in Table 1.

The data provide enough information to answer several important questions: Are the instructors favorably disposed toward the present grading system? What do they see as its most favorable or unfavorable aspects? What do they see as the functions and results of grades? Do they feel grades are fair to the individual? Why or why not? What accounts for high grades? How do the instructors feel about instructor options in determining grades? The following paragraphs are a discussion of instructor opinion concerning these questions. The number of the items which support the conclusion presented will be placed in parenthesis.

Overall, instructors appear to believe that some sort of grading system is necessary (18). The present grading system probably should be retained (1), at least until a suitable alternative is devised.

Effects of grades. Instructors seem to support the belief that grades make students anxious (14), competitive (13), and more studious (15). An instructor's reputation as an easy or hard grader influences enrollment in his course (11). Grades affect the student's self-concept (24), are useful in selecting students for

graduate school (26), and high grades help secure a good job (25).

Fairness. Under this rubric instructors were asked if grades accurately represent differing levels of student achievement (2, 12, 6), if the instructors are given enough data to make a valid decision (3), and if students are properly informed as to the basis on which grades are determined (4, 8). Results showed that the instructors were undecided as to whether grades accurately reflect differing levels of student achievement. However, instructors generally felt that they accumulate enough evidence to give a valid grade and that the students understand the basis for grading. One must therefore wonder why grades do not reflect different levels of achievement.

Variables in grade achievement. Instructors see grades as being tied to student effort (20), major area (21), and the specific section of a multisection course in which the student is enrolled. Grades are not a function of the instructor's ability (19). The extent to which student grades are a function of agreeing with the instructor is the only item on which a significant ($p<.01$) difference appeared between the faculty profile and the AI profile. Faculty felt student agreement with

instructors was not related to grades, while AI's felt that agreement with the instructor was related to course marks.

Studying is a relevant part of academic work, and faculty endorsed (71 percent) the idea that grades depend on effective study methods. However, about a fourth of the faculty disagreed with this idea. But faculty tended to be uncertain whether grades in one's major courses more accurately reflected achievement than grades in other courses.

Instructor options. The instructors felt that they should be allowed to select a different basis (paper vs. test) and a different standard of quality for grading different students in the same class. This means that instructors believed that a different yardstick could validly be applied to different students. It also implies that there is a means of equating, for example, one student's performance on a test with another student's performance on a term paper. Psychometrically, the means for doing this are obscure.

TABLE E
PERCENTAGE IN EACH RESPONSE CATEGORY
A = Associate Instructors, F = Faculty

	Statement		SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	The present grading system should be dropped.	A	10	39	26	10	16
		F	37	53	7	0	3
2.	On the whole a student's grades accurately represent his achievement at I.U.	A	10	35	19	35	0
		F	0	23	10	63	3
3.	Generally, I acquire enough evidence of a student's competence through the semester to report a valid grade for him.	A	0	16	10	65	10
		F	3	7	0	73	13
4.	Most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course.	A	10	45	19	23	3
		F	3	27	40	33	0
5.	Faculty are generally too lenient in awarding grades.	A	3	35	26	29	6
		F	3	23	20	53	0
6.	Few faculty will award Ds and Fs even to low achieving students.	A	3	29	10	58	0
		F	3	30	30	37	0
7.	Most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work.	A	0	16	16	52	16
		F	7	7	13	73	0
8.	Students in my class understand the basis on which their grades are given.	A	0	10	0	71	19
		F	0	0	13	40	43
9.	Within a given class, a faculty member should be allowed to select a different basis (i.e., tests, papers, etc.) for grading one student than is used for another student.	A	19	13	13	39	16
		F	10	13	13	43	20

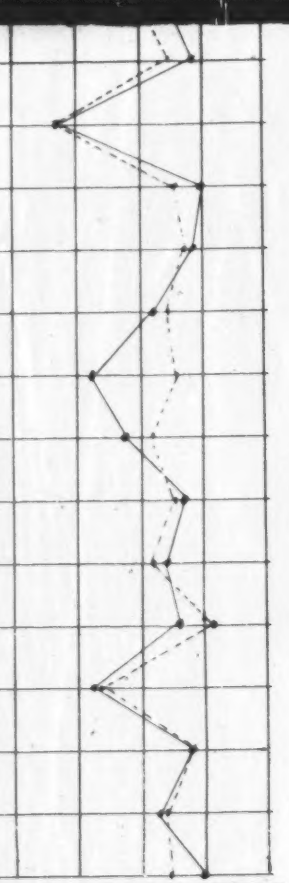
			SD	D	U	A	SA
10.	Within a given class the instructor should use the same standards of quality of a product (e.g., papers) for grading one student as he uses for grading other students.	A	3	23	6	45	23
		F	3	20	7	33	33
11.	An instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading is one influence on a student's selection of a course.	A	3	3	?	58	32
		F	0	3	13	67	17
12.	The grading system generally differentiates fairly among students who achieve at different levels.	A	3	39	16	39	3
		F	3	23	10	57	7
13.	Competition among students is created by the grading system.	A	3	26	3	55	13
		F	0	7	7	77	10
14.	Anticipation of course grades rarely causes students anxiety.	A	48	42	0	6	3
		F	46	40	7	7	0
15.	Students would probably study less in courses if grades didn't exist.	A	3	23	3	55	16
		F	0	7	17	47	30
16.	Some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards.	A	3	6	16	52	23
		F	3	7	3	70	17
17.	I prefer objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures.	A	0	23	32	32	13
		F	3	20	17	53	3
18.	To get a good grade it is often important for a student to agree with the instructor's opinions.	A	3	19	10	52	16
		F	13	60	10	13	3
19.	The more capable the instructor, the higher students' grades are likely to be.	A	3	26	16	55	0
		F	0	57	10	27	7
20.	Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies.	A	6	16	6	58	13
		F	0	17	13	53	17
21.	Grades more accurately correspond with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas.	A	0	23	35	42	0
		F	0	7	47	47	0

			SD	D	U	A	SA
22.	Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement.	A	0	0	10	61	29
		F	0	17	13	67	3
23.	Students with a reputation of high GPAs are less likely to be accepted by their peers.	A	10	61	16	10	0
		F	7	73	13	7	0
24.	A student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.	A	3	6	10	68	13
		F	0	7	10	80	3
25.	Better jobs after graduation are offered to students with high GPAs.	A	10	19	10	42	19
		F	0	23	30	43	3
26.	Grades are useful in selecting students for graduate school.	A	6	16	13	52	13
		F	3	0	10	63	23

Figure E1. Profile for Faculty and Associate Instructors
Faculty——; Associate Instructor -----

Statement	Faculty	AI
1. The present grading system should be dropped.	3.8	4.8
2. On the whole a student's grades accurately represent his achievement at I.U.	5.5	4.8
3. Generally, I acquire enough evidence of a student's competence through the semester to report a valid grade for him.	5.7	5.7
4. Most faculty make it clear to students precisely what they are to learn in a course.	5.0	4.7
5. Faculty are generally too lenient in awarding grades.	5.2	5.0
6. Few faculty will award Ds or Fs even to low achieving students.	5.0	5.2
7. Most faculty are confident about their ability to evaluate students' work	5.5	5.7
8. Students in my class understand the basis on which their grades are given.	6.1	6.0
9. Within a given class, a faculty member should be allowed to select a different basis (i.e., tests, papers, etc.) for grading one student than is used for another student.	5.5	5.2
10. Within a given class the instructor should use the same standards of quality of a product (e.g., papers) for grading one student as he uses for grading other students.	5.6	5.6
11. An instructor's reputation for strict or easy grading is one influence on a student's selection of a course.	6.0	6.1
12. The grading system generally differentiates fairly among		

13. Competition among students is created by the grading system.	5.9	5.5
14. Anticipation of course grades rarely causes students anxiety.	3.7	3.7
15. Students would probably study less in courses if grades didn't exist.	6.0	5.6
16. Some form of grading is necessary to uphold academic standards.	5.9	5.8
17. I prefer objective (test based) to subjective grading procedures.	5.2	5.4
18. To get a good grade it is often important for a student to agree with the instructor's opinions.	4.3	5.6
19. The more capable the instructor, the higher students' grades are likely to be.	4.8	5.2
20. Grades depend heavily on how effectively a student studies.	5.7	5.6
21. Grades more accurately correspond with achievement in a student's major than in other course areas.	5.4	5.2
22. Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement.	5.6	6.2
23. Students with a reputation of high GPAs are less likely to be accepted by their peers.	4.2	4.3
24. A student's GPA affects the way a student sees himself.	5.8	5.8
25. Better jobs after graduation are offered to students with high GPAs.	5.3	5.4
26. Grades are useful in selection students for graduate school.	6.0	5.5



COMPARING STUDENT AND FACULTY DATA

In a smoothly operating system of any kind, all groups perceive various aspects of the system in similar ways. How similarly do components of the University community view the grading system?

To begin with, students do not believe grades accurately reflect achievement; faculty agree. However, faculty believe that they acquire adequate information about a student's achievement. Students disagree with this view. Students appear to want more opportunities to demonstrate their accomplishments, while faculty feel this is unnecessary. One must also speculate why grades do not accurately reflect achievement if the faculty has collected adequate information on student performance.

Both students and faculty agree that faculty are quite confident about their grades. Students do not believe that faculty are too lenient in grading, but faculty are undecided on this point. Faculty tend to believe that their colleagues will avoid giving D's and F's even for poor performance, while students believe that D's and F's are likely to be awarded in such cases. It appears that students see grades as being distributed across all marks, while faculty doubt that low grades are typically awarded.

As to method of grading, both faculty and students believe that students understand the basis for their grades; however, students do not believe that it is always clear what it is they are to learn in a course--and faculty tend to agree with students on this point. It appears that even though course objectives may be obscure, the hurdles to a grade are not so unclear.

Students reported that it is important to agree with an instructor, and faculty tended to concur; however, AI's tended to disagree with this contention. This may be a clue to various styles of class management and amounts of experience in teaching seen among AI's in contrast to regular faculty. It may also mean that faculty see themselves as more authoritative than do AI's.

Students tended to believe that grades were in some degree related to the instructor's ability. Faculty disagreed. Faculty believed rather strongly that grades are related to effective study; students agreed but did not feel this way as strongly as did faculty.

How should grades be prescribed? Students were split between objective (test based) grading and subjective procedures; faculty were similarly divided. The AI's tended to favor an objective base. Both instructors and students agreed that a given performance may well

be given a different grade in different sections of the same course. This, in fact true*, means that a B in one section of a course may reflect the achievement of a C in another section of the same course. Students and faculty agree this is true. Inequities such as this probably should be a topic of serious study by departments.

Both faculty and students agreed (faculty more than students) that a faculty member may choose a different basis for grading one student than another, but that a faculty member should give the same grade to one student as another if the quality of the performance is the same. However, significant groups (33 percent of the students, 26 percent of the instructors) disagreed that a common grade should necessarily go with a given level of quality. This means that a faculty member can measure performance with a different yardstick for each student. In this case the meaning of a grade must melt into obscurity.

Lastly, students and instructors agree that grades are related to student competition, that they are anxiety producing and that they influence a student's self-concept. The personality concommitants of student grades seem evident.

*Doerann, Judith A. "Equivalence of Grades in Multisection Courses", Indiana Studies in Prediction No. 22, Bureau of Educational Studies and Testing, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1973.